

Council Highlights: April, 1999

Studies show that demand for university education could grow by 40%

The findings of two major studies commissioned by the Council of Ontario Universities in the fall of 1998 and released at a news conference on March 31, 1999 show that the demand for university education in Ontario could grow by as much as 40% and that Ontarians fully expect that all qualified students will have access to quality education in their province.

The first study, undertaken by the management consulting and accounting firm PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), analyzed enrolment projections and the capacity of Ontario universities to meet the projected demand. The study's findings report that, due to a combination of factors, enrolments are likely to swell by an additional 88,900 students over the next decade. The surge in demand is expected to begin in 2002 when secondary school reforms will result in an abrupt rise in the number of high school graduates.

At the height of the secondary school reform, an additional 33,500 young people could be seeking opportunities at Ontario universities. This phenomenon will occur in concert with a substantial growth in the 18- to 24-year-old population, increasing rates of participation in university education, and changing workplace requirements that demand higher educational attainment.

Robert Prichard, Chair of COU and President of the University of Toronto, stated: "The PwC study suggests that we could face a 40% increase in demand. This should not be viewed as a temporary problem. This is an opportunity to plan for the long term. Ontario universities welcome this opportunity to move forward, in partnership with government, to achieve the shared goal of ensuring that our standards match or surpass international benchmarks."

The recent report of the Ontario Jobs and Investment Board (see the story on page 2) suggests a central goal of making Ontario home to a world-class education system. Ontario universities strongly support the priorities identified in the report of attracting and retaining the best and brightest educators and researchers to our campuses, ensuring the delivery of quality education, increasing the province's research capacity, and improving the range of assistance programs available to students.

Public opinion research undertaken by the Angus Reid Group examined public expectations of Ontario universities and obtained views on options for dealing with the increased demand. Findings demonstrate decisively that the people of Ontario expect that all qualified students will have access to education. Of the 1,000 surveyed, 96% agreed that it is a priority for government to ensure access for every qualified student.

Both universities and government will have their work cut out for them to meet that expectation. Ontario is on the verge of the greatest increase in demand for university opportunities in 30 years. Projections show that between 11,000 and 13,000 new and additional faculty will need to be hired by Ontario universities to keep pace with enrolment growth, replace retiring faculty, and reduce the student/faculty ratio to the national average; additional laboratories, classrooms and library resources will also be needed.

The Angus Reid study notes that Ontarians consider these to be pressing issues that call for a response. People expect that students will have the opportunity to receive an education that is of comparable quality to that offered in competing jurisdictions, and they fully expect that this increased demand will be accommodated.

Meeting these expectations will require a major investment by the people of Ontario. COU has developed "low" and "high" cost models to assist with the next stages of analysis. By the mid-years of the next decade, the projected increase in annual investment required for operations, capital and student assistance ranges from a low of \$1.2 billion to a high of \$1.8 billion. (COU's

report, Ontario's Students, Ontario's Future, outlines these costing models, as well as the commitment of universities to maximize the use of new technologies, to work more closely with the colleges, to search for ways to use existing resources more effectively and to develop additional performance measures.)

Ian Clark, President of COU, stated: "The projected costs are intended to be illustrative rather than definitive, but they provide an idea of the magnitude of the challenge before us." Dr. Clark expressed confidence that the continuing discussions with the government will generate a number of ideas and specific solutions that will lead to a consensus on the most cost-effective means of addressing these issues.

Report cites education as a top priority for economic prosperity

The Council of Ontario Universities responded favourably to the Ontario Jobs and Investment Board (OJIB) recently released report, *A Road Map to Prosperity: An Economic Plan for Jobs in the 21st Century*. The report establishes a mission for Ontario -- goals, strategies and actions -- to achieve sustainable economic prosperity with the best performing economy and highest quality of life in North America over the next 10 years.

To achieve this mission, the OJIB report identifies five strategic areas, the first being "knowledge and skills." More than half of the priorities to enrich the economic foundation of Ontario set out in *A Road Map to Prosperity* revolve around education.

"Recognition of the importance of education to the future of this province and its people is threaded throughout the report," said Paul Davenport, Vice-Chair of COU. "It is clear that the thousands of Ontarians who participated in the consultation process leading up to the creation of the report place the skills and knowledge that our population possesses at the top of the list."

Ontario universities actively participated in the Ontario Jobs and Investment Board's consultation processes through the submission of briefs and written commentaries. They were also represented at each of the seven Premier's Conferences, which were held across the province.

Agreement signed to expand support to graduate students

The Ontario Council on Graduate Studies (OCGS) signed a Master Collaboration Agreement with El Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología (CONACyT) in Mexico City, in conjunction with the official opening of the EduCanada Fair in the city on February 23, 1999.

CONACyT is the Mexican granting agency that supports the training of graduate students through agreements with various jurisdictions. Ontario universities, through OCGS, have had an agreement with the agency since 1996. The primary objective of this new agreement, which expands the existing program to include more universities and more disciplines, is to support students at the doctoral level, specifically, in science and technology, who would be unable to continue their studies due to limited program opportunities at Mexican universities. The agency also supports students in a broad spectrum of programs at the master's and doctoral levels.

To date, 14 Ontario universities have confirmed their participation in this collaboration agreement. Under the terms of the agreement, participating universities specify the number of scholarship recipients they are prepared to co-fund and the programs of study that are available to these students. Mexican students are expected to apply to the agency for a scholarship and to gain admission to the Ontario university of their choice.

The agreement was signed on behalf of CONACyT by Director-General Carlos Bazdresch Parada and Dr. Sylvia Ortega Salazar, Deputy Director-General for International Affairs, and on

behalf of OCGS by Dr. David Leyton-Brown, Dean of Graduate Studies at York University and Chair of OCGS and Dr. Nicole Bégin-Heick, Executive Director of OCGS. The ceremony was presided over by His Excellency Stanley Gooch, Canada's Ambassador to Mexico.

New entry-to-practice requirements for registered nurses for 2005

On March 15, 1999, the Ministry of Health announced its decision to accept the recommendations put forth by its Nursing Task Force on new entry-to-practice requirements for future registered nurses. Beginning in 2005, all new registered nurses must achieve a baccalaureate nursing degree as the minimum entry-to-practice requirement, as recommended by the College of Nurses of Ontario. The ministry plans to establish an implementation committee immediately to respond, within 90 days, to the implications of its announcement.

COU has formed a Working Group on Baccalaureate Nursing Education, chaired by Dr. Peter George, President of McMaster University, to examine key issues such as college-university collaboration and the anticipated increase in university enrolment.

Review of the findings of the graduate placement survey

At the end of 1998, the Ontario Universities' Application Centre distributed a survey to more than 50,000 students who graduated from Ontario universities in 1996. On April 6, 1999, the COU-MET Steering Committee began its review of the final survey results, which include the mail replies and responses to telephone follow-up calls made by the universities. The committee intends to circulate the results to institutions for their review before releasing survey data at the end of April 1999.

COU publishes its biennial report

COU recently published its *Biennial Report 1996-1998*. The report profiles four public policy challenges – funding, research, tuition fees and student assistance reform – and key relevant facts. The publication also features a detailed review of the work of Council over the report's two-year period. Distribution of the report is currently underway.

Symposium on the auto parts sector scheduled for June

The Office for Partnerships for Advanced Skills (OPAS) and the Auto Parts Manufacturers Association (APMA) will co-sponsor a symposium to be held at Mississauga Living Arts Centre on June 8, 1999. Co-chaired by Dr. Ross Paul, President of the University of Windsor, and Ken Nichol, CEO of Ventra Group, the Auto Parts Symposium will provide a forum for discussion on shared concerns, including the curricula of university programs whose graduates seek employment in the field, and skills upgrading for those currently working in the auto parts sector.

The symposium, which was proposed by COU's Task Force on Labour Market Issues, is the second sectoral symposium organized by OPAS. The first symposium, which was held in January 1999, focused on the biotechnology sector (see the November 1998 issue of Council Highlights).

COU establishes working group on teacher education

In February, COU established a Working Group on Teacher Education chaired by Dr. David Turpin, Vice-Principal (Academic), Queen's University, with representation from the Ontario

Association of Deans of Education; Council on University Planning and Analysis; Ontario Council of Academic Vice-Presidents; and Academic Colleagues. The working group was formed in response to the Deputy Minister's request for an expansion of teacher education consecutive programs to deal with projected teacher shortages. Its mandate is to refine the proposal for a Teacher Education Quality and Innovation Fund, and to address other issues related to the agreement to expand teacher education enrolments in consecutive programs by 500 students in 1999-2000 and by an additional 500 the next year. The group met in March and will meet again in early April to finalize the proposal.

Fall conference on postsecondary education and the economy

COU has agreed to work with the Canadian Urban Institute; the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism; and the Association of Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology of Ontario to examine the impact of postsecondary education institutions on the economic viability of communities. As part of this shared initiative, a conference is being organized for the fall of 1999.

Spring issue of *INFO* magazine recently published

The spring issue of *INFO* magazine, the comprehensive guide to all Ontario universities for secondary school students and guidance counsellors, is now available from the Ontario Universities' Application Centre (OUAC). *INFO* magazine is published twice annually – in the fall for both students and counsellors, and in the spring for counsellors only – by the Standing Committee on Secondary School Liaison of the Ontario Universities Registrars' Association, COU and OUAC.